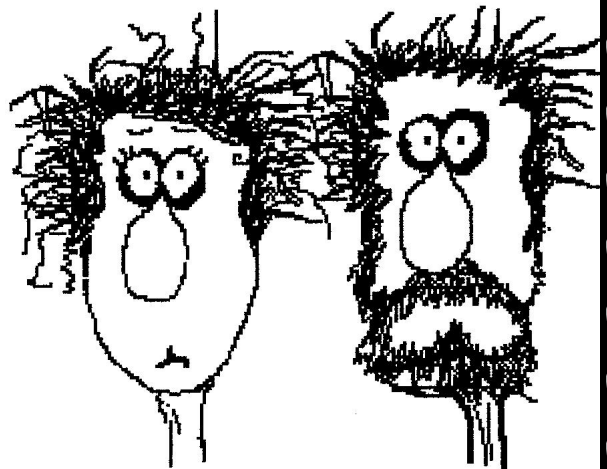


**TOP 10 QUESTIONS
ANSWERED TO CUT THE
CHAOS WITH
CHALLENGING
CHILDREN**

**BY
NANCY THOMAS**



Top 10 Questions Answered to Cut the Chaos with Challenging Children

by Nancy Thomas

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1) What can I do about my daughter stealing and lying? It makes me so mad!

I used to get angry too. I found that anger just fueled the fire so I quit getting angry! I had to find a way to be happy with it! Sounds Looney-tunes, I know. Bear with me. When I have a child steal, I look for what's positive about it and I get proud of them for their eagle eyes, their courage, their ability to plan etc. and I shape the negative part (which is the dishonesty), so that all the positive parts are still there and honored and the dishonest part is shaped.

When I have a child that lies. I look at the positive part—they are incredibly creative, fast thinkers, outstanding acting skills, etc. and then I get happy about those parts of the behavior and I shape the dishonest part into an honest behavior such as having them write a story using the whopper they have just shared as part of the story. I have them write a story daily that we read to the family to share their acting abilities--not a punishment, just using their gift appropriately.

I found that getting angry and frustrated about my children's' behavior made them worse and sure didn't work for me. I found ways to get happy and honor the good parts of their behaviors so that I could stay uplifted and positive and be more successful in helping them to get strong and healthy.

2) My Child is having behavior problems around school issues what should I do?

Having a great teacher on your team can absolutely make a huge difference in the healing of an emotionally disturbed child. They thrive with a well-organized, structured teacher. They get sicker with a loving, motherly teacher that they can manipulate and control.

When behaviors escalate it is often because a child does not feel safe in school. The school needs more training to be able to provide for these special needs. I recommend you have an IEP (Individual Education Plan) with the school. If not, insist on one! It is Federal law and a child diagnosed with mental illness IS qualified for the support needed because of special needs. When they are doing things at school correctly, according to your child's needs, the behavior should stop! If we cannot get the school on board I like to hire a tutor to come in two days a week and assign work and correct it. I stay completely out of it and just set the timer for 30 to 45 minutes of desk time and then 15 minute activity break (Brain Gyms activities are the best) and then 30-45 minute of desk time again until the day is over according to the set time by the tutor.

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3) What can I do when my child won't go to the room to calm down?

First thing I do in the situation is try to be more proactive and head them in the right direction BEFORE they are locked down into defiance. The 3BI system works great if you do it quickly and calmly the first time there is ONE toe over the line of disrespect or defiance. Remember: use a brain shifting activity, then ask; "What happened?" then after they get honest ask: "What are you going to do to make it up/ clean it up / repair it?" Always give a loving hug in between each of the three steps. This gets faster and faster each time they do it *as long* as parents stay happy and loving. If they can get you frustrated or angry it takes a long time.

The best choice is to wait them out. "I can see you are not strong enough to go to your room. I want you to rest until you are strong enough to go and be quiet for 10 minutes. You can stand, sit, lie down, or kneel till you are ready. Don't do it now." Then you walk away and work nearby, standing up. I usually prepare some food for the next meal or write a card on the kitchen counter to someone or something short and not too distracting so I can watch the child out of the corner of my eye and move quickly if they move to create chaos or harm themselves or others.

I like to *sometimes* give choices (ONLY if they have healed enough) such as: "You can come with me to your room with help or without help. If I have to help you, you will be in there longer. 10 minutes of quiet or 30 minutes of quiet. Show me which one you want. Let's go". Then you walk toward the room. When he follows (10 minutes for a 10 year old 5 for a 5 year old etc.). You have to return and take him by the hand or herd him in it is 30 to 45 minutes. Time starts when he quits the yodeling and drumming in there. When the time is up, you go to the room and open ask him "what happened?" in a kind voice. Big hug, calmly and "What was it you needed to do before you went to your room? (crisscross/jumping jacks) Excellent! Show me you are strong enough to do it now." They do it; another hug, and THEN they come out and work on the restitution plan.

When I do not get upset and put pressure on them with my words or attitude they usually can get there quicker. If I get upset and try to get them there faster it is harder for them. Once they make themselves go to the room and start to get quiet I try to startle them into a better attitude for this time AND next time by doing some silliness such as opening the door and quickly throwing goodies like yogurt covered raisin or nuts in the air and yelling "Easter egg hunt!!" and closing the door in a flash. Surprise! Incoming love!

If it ain't fun you are doing it wrong!! :>))

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4) What do I do with my child who over-eats because he was starved?

Food issues are a real dilemma. We nurture with food and we fuel our systems with food and many things can interfere with our ability to do either one correctly. Being starved early on sure makes it very difficult for our children to trust that they will be fed and nurtured. They associate food and love very closely. If we take food away or withhold they could feel we are taking or withholding our love. If we let them eat till they are sick we feel like an irresponsible parent. I have tried many things over the years with this group of wounded kiddos. What I have found to be the worst is restricting food and fighting with the child daily over the issue until meals become just stress for everyone.

What works best for most is to serve the food on the plate at the normal amount for a child of that size/age. After one other member of the family has finished their first plate full the child may ask for seconds. They may not ask for seconds if there is still food on their plate. Seconds is a much smaller amount of everything. They usually only want the carbs. That is not an option. They may not ask for thirds until someone else at the table finishes seconds besides them. They may eat until I am finished with my meal. I am a slow eater because I like to visit with everyone *and* eat. When I am done the meal is over and the table is cleared. We have a mid morning and after school snack that is NOT carbs. We serve protein snacks for kids that have high stress levels. Nuts, hard-boiled eggs, cheese, apples or celery with peanut butter or something along those lines works great for snacks.

If they still manage to eat until they are sick there is no lecture, no "I told you so". Just empathy and sorry you don't feel good. They have been told over and over and the more we control the less they build self-control until you have a 400-pound teenager because we did not let them learn to say no.

I keep an alarm on my children's doors at night for safety (to stop the stealing, sexual acting out and harming pets). That also keeps them out of the kitchen at night. We love cooking and eating together as a family and meals are a time of enjoying each other and laughing about the day. I hope this helps you get there too!

5) My older teen just left home and won't speak to me! What can I do?

Oh, such heartache when our kiddos leave home the hard way! The way I describe it and live through it is that: we, as loving parents, plant the seeds of love in a child. Some children can just let that love grow and fill their life and thrive. Others need more fertilizer! Those young people go out in the world away from parents and roll in the manure with others making the same sad choices until they have enough fertilizer to grow. Some need a few days, some weeks, some years. When they have acquired enough they return home to those who love them so the sunshine of our love can warm them up for the seeds of love to grow!!

It sounds like your son is heading off for his fertilizer. He will be home when he has enough. What I like to do during this time is invite them to dinner every Friday or Saturday. I set a



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place and make enough. Sometimes they show up, often they don't, but I know I have the door open. When they show up there is NO interrogation or condemnation. A great meal and fun visit with chitchat about the current fun activities and the weather. I send them home with lots of leftovers and goodies so they feel my love longer and hope to see them the next Friday or whichever day I had set up. NO MONEY is ever given to them. No bailing out of jail. Visit and love and let them learn as much as they need to in order to figure it out.

In the mean time this is the time to celebrate your new freedom and extra time. Do not mourn for the loving departure you wanted him to launch from home with. Adopted children have a very hard time separating from a mom because they fear abandonment and rejection so very much (to their core) that they often abandon and reject first!

You taught him and loved him. He has the best you could give him inside of him. Trust in that and relax! Stressing yourself into a ball of pain will give you wrinkles and an ulcer. Believe in your son. He can turn it around!

"For a seed to achieve its greatest expression, it must come completely undone. Its shell cracks, its insides come out and everything changes. To someone who doesn't understand growth, it would look like complete destruction"

I have launched a bunch! They find their way home!!!!!!

6) How can I keep my home a place of peace with screaming, raging children in it?

I believe as Americans we are given freedom of speech. And when my children are venting I'm proud of them as Americans enjoying their freedom of speech :) I also am an American, and I savor my freedom of the pursuit of happiness! Which means, I don't have to listen to their freedom of speech. I have headphones that you cannot hear a chainsaw through! The healthy children in the house also have some. They are kept handy for strategic moments. These are great times to work on your sign language skills or have an ugly face making competition with the healthy children. You could become mimes, or you can listen to audio books with a little ear bud put underneath the headphones. But the most fun thing of all--when a child is raging--is to have a little ear bud with music in it underneath your headphones and dance with the healthy kids! Dancing is very therapeutic--a great outlet. Boogie hard! A polka is a lot of fun!

I choose not to catch the anger that the child has. I choose to be happy. The mom sets the heart of the home. So if mom is happy, most of the children in the house will choose to be happy as well. The child with RAD, when they heal, will know what happiness looks like because they've seen it all around them. They may not choose to exercise that particular freedom, to pursue their own happiness, but it's still there.



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Every day I choose to pursue my happiness. I still love the unhappy, miserable children, but I spend more time with children who are fun to be with--the other children get stuck doing something wrong over and over (sitting or some other battle they have chosen to fight with themselves). I let them fight those battles without letting them suck the family into it. If they are determined to bring other family members into the battle by getting into your face or poking at you or grabbing your clothes or becoming violent I call a "code purple" and the healthy children and I go in my room and lock the door. I keep a basket in the closet with a stash of games and prizes (like cracker jack kind of prizes) and snack food that won't spoil if it's in there for months. So, when we have a battle seeker, they are outside the door, the rest of the family is inside focused on fun. Usually, the one outside the door will spend their time and energy pounding on the door, which I always appreciate because I know exactly where they are! If they quit pounding then I start to worry about what they're doing and where they are! I have also found it helpful to release the stress of these children and myself when we have these door pounders, using the rhythm they are creating with their drumming to dance with the other children! We do not inflame the door pounder by interacting with them through the door--we focus on the stress release program and let the drummers find their own release valve to calm themselves while I'm protecting the other children from more stress and emotional damage.

When a child has a major meltdown and is pounding and screaming and all of that stuff. I look at it like a storm. When you see a storm on the horizon--you see the dark clouds gathering, you know you need to get ready--bring the laundry in, close the car windows, etc.--you don't get upset and try to stop the storm. You just know that it's there and you get ready. When we have a storm overhead we have the thunder rolling and the lightning crashing--the rain and the hail beating down for a period of time. Then after the storm goes, what do we have? We have the calm after the storm. And those of us that are Christians also get a rainbow that we believe is a promise. So, I look at the children's' big venting just like that storm. When you see the storm (emotional storm) building up, you know you need to prepare--next the storm is crashing and all the emotions are being released. The sounds of the storm, screaming and yelling, are overhead we can't stop it and neither can they. After the storm of emotions is passed there is a calm period that is the most powerful bonding time for a child. We don't want to miss that opportunity to help heal a child's broken heart. So when I have a child go through a big emotional venting, I look for the calm after it so I have the opportunity to really fill them with my love. I pull them up into my arms, keep love in my eyes, speak gently and lovingly and I tell them all the things that I love about them. I point out the gifts and the blessings that they have. (Not a lecture!) It is a sharing of my love and the specialness that I see in them. I don't dread the storms. I dance in the rain!

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7) How do I find a therapist and know if they are any good?

A therapist who is trained to work with a child with Attachment Disorder will insist on having you in the therapy room during every session because your heart is the most important thing to heal your child's heart, but this disorder (RAD) puts a roadblock between you and your child.

- ♥ The therapist's main goal should be to connect you and your child.
- ♥ The second goal should be to give him a safe place to release and resolve past trauma.
- ♥ The third goal is to help your child to develop skills to use words rather than actions to deal with current feelings.
- ♥ The fourth goal should be to help YOU manage behaviors and teach relationship and life skills at home.
- ♥ The fifth goal is to help you manage your stress of living with an emotionally disturbed child that is wearing you down.

Unfortunately there are not a lot of trained attachment therapists. Once you find a good one they are well worth the investment of time and money. I used to drive three hours each way, once a week for the children. I am so glad I got them the best treatment I could find while I provided the healing program at home. I understand how exhausting it is being a mom and worrying about your sick child. I want you to know that you are not alone. There are many of us out here with the same heavy heart for our children. I also want you to know there is hope, my children are loving, healthy and fun to be with now. It is worth the fight for our children! Hang in there!

8) How do you keep your home peaceful? I am sick of the chaos!

My home is not always peaceful. Children who came from chaos crave chaos to keep the inside of them balanced with the outside, so they create chaos in a home where they can. I GIVE them chaos in a loving way, such as; chasing them around the house with a can of squirty whipped cream and making moustaches on them---it's a lot of squealing and laughing, even the dog gets a whipped cream moustache! We do silly things that are chaotic here--many of our children are addicted to adrenaline and will create adrenaline rushes in their own brain with destruction and inappropriate behaviors to get people around them to turn 'purple' and scream. If I was to 'lose it', on the child's terms, it would fuel their addiction. I wouldn't ever want to do that--it would be like giving them illegal drugs. It would hurt the childrens' brains. It's important that we use action not anger, action not words.



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9) We have healthy children and a severely emotionally disturbed child. How we can make our home a place they want to be rather than a place they want to escape from?

The healthy children need to have one-on-one time with each parent every week. We used to pick our kids up from school and take them out to lunch. Sometimes they'd have a ball game, play or something and the disturbed child would go to respite so we could go to the ballgame. The healthy child needs to have one-on-one time to vent about whatever behaviors the sick child is doing that stresses them with no guilt loaded on them for the way they feel. They need a little more freedom than other children may need, they really need to have a safe place where they can vent--that's the most important thing. We don't need to make excuses or give explanations. We do need to listen, validate, understand, and love them. I tried to honor my healthy children by making them part of the healing team. As children they were a small part certainly, but they knew that they were important and that they were helping a sick child by their behavior and their actions.

10) How do you get little kids to bed at night? It is such a battle!

For children under five with early childhood trauma the best routine is: The first year they are home with us we like to have the little ones sleep very close by. If you rock them to sleep, put them down and leave them, they wake up, you're gone and they are afraid. So they fight sleep longer and longer. We recommend that new parents, especially tired ones, have the child sleep in their room whether in your bed or in their bed next to your bed. Do a steady routine nightly of bath time with lavender, quiet story time (calm story), rub their back while they are in their own bed and then mom gets in her bed and can read, or write silently until mom is ready to go to sleep. If the child wakes up mom is close by and the child will feel safe. Make sure your little one has adequate exercise and is put to bed at the same time every night with lights out. Darkness is essential for the brain to produce melatonin.

I hope you find this information helpful in your quest to help a wounded child. Your questions are so important and the work that you do with the children is vital. Your hearts are the lifelines for your children --the hurting ones and the healthy ones. Thank you for what you do.

We can make a difference, Nancy